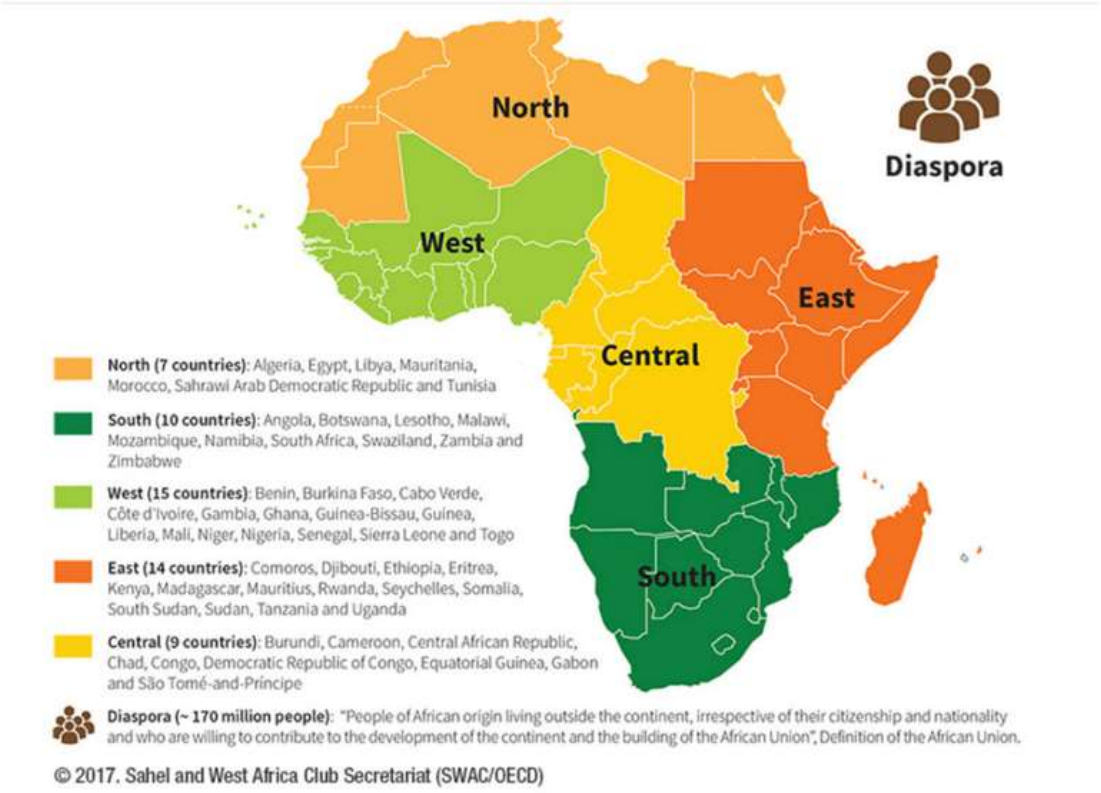
“THE AFRICAN DIASPORA”

What it is and *what it isn’t*



By

Servias Mazhetese

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Foreword

I wrote this report as my contribution to the Committee set up by the African Diaspora Development Institute (ADDI) to define the meaning of the "African Diaspora."

This was in preparation for the 5th preparatory meeting for the 8th Pan African Congress (8PAC1) Part 1: Definition of the Diaspora. 8PAC1 is scheduled to be held in Zimbabwe, sometime in 2023. It may also be used as input to the Global African Diaspora Symposium organised by Africa Diaspora Alliance (AfDA), to be held on April 27-28, 2023, in Abuja, Nigeria.

The contents of the book are mostly exempts from the definition of the fifteen different formations identifying themselves with the "African Diaspora," either within Africa or outside the continent, also known as the 6th Region. At the end is a brief summary of my deductions from the definitions of these formations.

About the Author

Servias Mazhetese is a senior Information Communication Technology (ICT) professional with more than thirty (30) years' experience in the industry.

Servias is a Pan-Africanist who wants to see Africa developing through collaboration between Africans within the continent of Africa and those outside. He believes that this can be achieved through the adoption of one language and one stable currency backed by Africa's abundance of natural resources.

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Introduction

“The term ‘’African Diaspora’’ has been used by various politicians, historians, writers, and ethnographers to refer to all descendants of Africa. Some scholars have used it to refer to the current emigration from Africa. The African Union defines the African Diaspora as individuals of African origin living away from their home continent (Africa). The phrase "African Diaspora’’ was coined during the 19th century, but only came into common use during the 21st century. The largest population of the African Diaspora resides in the following nations” (World Atlas, 2023).

The phrase "African Diaspora" is composed of two words, "African" and "Diaspora." Combined, they form one of the most misunderstood communities. To understand the meaning better, it is important to break down and explain the two words, separately.

African

Firstly, there is a need to define who an African is. In Africa, "African" generally refers to a "Black African," regardless of where one resides. In this context, my understanding of "African Diaspora" is a black African, either born in Africa or whose origins are in Africa regardless of where one currently resides. This includes Africans not residing in

their country of origin within and outside Africa. This also includes blacks who know their African country of origin and those who do not.

Diaspora

The word "diaspora" has its roots in the ancient Greek term "diaspeirein," which means "to disperse" or "scatter" and is derived from the combination of "dia," meaning "across," and "speirein," meaning "scatter." The concept originated in the Septuagint, a Greek translation of the Hebrew Bible, specifically in Deuteronomy 28:25, which states, "Thou shalt be a dispersion in all kingdoms of the earth." Essentially, a diaspora involves people leaving their native land and settling in various parts of the world, carrying with them their cultural heritage. One well-known example is the Jewish Diaspora, which refers to the scattering of Jews from their homeland in Israel due to the Babylonian exile, as mentioned in the Bible (Diaspora Therapies, 2023).

As a Zimbabwean who has been living and working in South Africa for more than 15 years now, the author is considered to be in the diaspora. This is because he is not living and staying in country of origin, but “scattered” in another country. Therefore, he is part of the Zimbabwean (African) Diaspora in South Africa (SADC).

Regional Economic Communities (RECs)

Six RECs

There are 5 geopolitical regions inside continental Africa, namely, SADC, EAC, Central, West African and North African Communities and 1 outside the continent, Region Six (Sixth Region). In its Executive Council of the Seventh Ordinary Session, held on 28 June to 2 July 2005, the AU adopted the granting of observer status (African Union, 2005, p. 50).

"In January 2008, the Executive Council suggested that the African diaspora be treated as Africa's sixth region and its participation in the AU's organs and activities be strengthened (EX.CL/Dec.406(XII)) (African Union, 2012, p. 43)*. The Assembly has recognised the diaspora as a substantive entity contributing to the economic and social development of the continent and has invited its representatives as observers to Assembly sessions (see Assembly/AU/Res.1(XVIII) of January 2012)"* (African Union Commission, 2021, p. 20)

Throughout the AU Ordinary Sessions, the Diaspora has been granted observer status. However, there seem to be many formations of the Sixth Region, and these include but are not limited to:

1. 6th Region Global Chamber of Commerce
2. AADFI: African and African Diaspora Fellows for Infrastructure

3. ADDI: The African Diaspora Development Institute
4. ADF: African Diaspora Forum
5. ADFC: African Diaspora Finance Corporation
6. ADG: African Diaspora Group
7. ADN: African Diaspora Network
8. AfDA: African Diaspora Alliance
9. AU6RUSA: African Unity Sixth Region, USA.
10. DAF: Diaspora African Forum
11. DIDG: Diaspora Infrastructure Development Group
12. ECO-6: Economic Community Region Six.
13. NiDCOM: Nigerians in Diaspora Commission
14. OACPS: The Organisation of African, Caribbean and Pacific States
15. SOAD: State of the African Diaspora

How They Describe the African Diaspora

Each formation has a way of describing its understanding of the “African Diaspora.”

Below are excerpts from their websites.

1. 6th Region Global Chamber of Commerce

"Within the African Union, there are 6 regions, namely, North Africa, West Africa, Central Africa, East Africa, Southern Africa, and one last region, recognized in the African Union's constitution as the "sixth region," which is comprised of the African Diaspora. The diaspora was constituted in 2003 to encourage the participation of people of African origin living outside of the continent."

"The African Union (AU) is a continental body consisting of 55 member states from various African countries. It was officially launched in 2002 as a successor to the organization of African Unity (OAU, 1963-1999)."

"The ***Economic Community of the 6th Region (ECO-6)*** *is the Economic Community of the 6th Region of the African Union. Its mission is to promote economic development thus Connecting Africa with its Diaspora and the Diaspora with Africa.* ***ECO 6*** *Harmonizes cooperation between financial and business institutions for the proper allocation of land, labour, capital, and entrepreneurship for the sustainable development of Africa and its Diaspora"* (6th Region Global Chamber of Commerce, 2023)

2. AADFI: African and African Diaspora Fellows for Infrastructure

"For this recruitment drive, we are looking for potential candidates with strong skills for the following roles:

- *Infrastructure- West Africa*
- *Infrastructure- Transport ECA*
- *Infrastructure- Digital Development*
- *Infrastructure- Energy*
- *Infrastructure- Finance, PPPs & Guarantees*

Applicants should be either citizens of Sub-Saharan African countries or those who hold the citizenship of other countries but trace their ancestry to Sub-Saharan Africa, such as African-Americans, Afro-Latin-Americans, Afro-Caribbean, and others. Applicants should describe in their cover letter how they meet the requirements of the A&AD Infrastructure Fellows Program." (African and African Diaspora Fellows for Infrastructure, 2023)

3. ADDI: The African Diaspora Development Institute

"The African Diaspora Development Institute was born out of the desire to bring Africa to the world and the world to Africa. There currently is no one resource to easily find information about Africa. ADDI aims to become that resource.

We have come to the realization that the current status of the African economy is due to the mass exodus of the African Diaspora out of Africa. This exodus began with the loss of Africa's children through slavery 400 years ago, followed by the recent Migrants who left Africa in search of greener pastures or running away from famine and wars. The children of Africa have ended up in the Americas, Australia and New Zealand, Europe, and Asia. African Heads of State are calling on all people of African Descent (African Diaspora) to come back home and build the Africa we want" (African Diaspora Development Institute, 2023)

4. ADF: African Diaspora Forum

"The African Diaspora Forum was created in immediate reaction to the xenophobic attacks rising in May 2008. Several community leaders and concerned residents in South Africa, called by Ivorian community leader Marc Gbaffou and Carnival organiser and pan african enthusiast Rayban Sengwayo, came together and decided to create

a platform for African migrants to voice their concern and work for an integrated society" (African Diaspora Forum, 2023).

5. ADFC: African Diaspora Finance Corporation

"On 2-3 February 2022, the 40th Session of the African Union Executive Council formally adopted the 'Strategic, Business and Operational Framework for an African Diaspora Finance Corporation (ADFC)' as the framework for the African Union legacy project on diaspora investment. This came after the endorsement by the African Ministers of Finance on 17 December 2021, and consideration by the relevant sub-committee of the AU's Permanent Representatives Committee (PRC). The AU Commission shall undertake a further feasibility study, covering business operations, investment planning and criteria, and the application of ADFC funds." (African Union, 2022).

6. ADG: African Diaspora Group

"The African Diaspora describes people of African origin, living outside of the continent by choice, or most predominantly against their will, due to the Transatlantic slave trade. The diaspora is vast and includes displaced Africans living in numerous countries all around the world. It is time for Africans in the diaspora to break free from their manufactured identities and return to the knowledge of self as an African. Together,

the diaspora can do great work on the continent alongside the brothers and sisters who have remained" (African Diaspora Group, 2023)

7. ADN: African Diaspora Network

"African Diaspora Network is a registered 501(c)(3) non-profit organization. Our mission is to sustainably serve our constituencies, marketplace, and partners. This is inextricably linked to engaging the African diaspora through an ethics of care, enhancing their well-being in their adopted homelands, and facilitating their strategic involvement in the development of Africa.

Since 2010, the African Diaspora Network (ADN) has energized collaboration among Silicon Valley entrepreneurs, philanthropists, and African diasporans to uplift Africa and the communities we live in. ADN is dedicated to providing virtual and physical forums to accelerate access to resources that foster partnership, knowledge sharing, and advance investment opportunities.

We are the first organization to bring together a global network of Africans and friends of Africa connecting entrepreneurs, investors, academics, and leaders of non-profit organizations, corporations, and official development agencies to learn, engage, and

co-create possibilities. Our tangible results have cemented us as a trusted partner that provides real value to the ecosystem." (Africa Diaspora Network, 2023)

8. AfDA: The African Diaspora Alliance

"The African Union has declared the Diaspora as the 6th region of the continent and has invited the support of those people in Diaspora who are willing to contribute to the economic and social development of the continent" (ECO-6, 2023).

The African Diaspora Alliance (AfDA) started because of the need to pull together all the African Diaspora, regardless of their physical location, and their rights to inclusion in the African Union.

In addition, to consolidate the efforts of international Diaspora organizations to support Africa's economic, healthcare, education, and technical growth. We also serve as a link between the Diaspora, African governments, and the African Union, to identify Diaspora resources, talent and networks to help Africa monetize its resource" (The African Diaspora Alliance, 2023).

9. AU6RUSA: The AU Sixth Region USA

"The AU Sixth Region USA Foundation is a Network of the People of African Descent in the USA, as part of the Sixth Region of the African Continent residing outside the Continent" (AU Sixth Region USA, 2023).

10. DAF: Diaspora African Forum

"Centuries ago, the Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade ripped millions of Africans from the shores of the continent, dividing kith and kin, dispersing Africans throughout the Americas and Europe in the worst crime committed against humanity in history. This was the origin of the first massive disbursement of Africans to the Diaspora.

The contemporary African Diaspora also includes migrants from the continent over the past decades seeking opportunities in employment and education. We work in solidarity with all Africans at home and abroad with a desire to return home and help build the wealthiest continent in the world filled with immeasurable resources including Africa's people. DAF is committed to African development" (Diaspora African Forum, 2023).

11. DIDG: Diaspora Infrastructure Development Group

"Diaspora Infrastructure Development Group ("DIDG") is a company founded and duly incorporated in Zimbabwe and South Africa spearheaded largely by Zimbabwean Diasporas based in South Africa with the long-term plan of expanding shareholder base to Diasporans in any other jurisdictions globally as well as Zimbabwean residents. DIDG's principal motive is to establish ways that will unlock foreign capital inflows and know-how towards the development of Zimbabwe's infrastructure.

DIDG is not a fund but rather an investment holding company that aims to hold equity and control in the assets to be privatized. Our strategic intent is to be the investment vehicle for all diasporans seeking to participate in Zimbabwe's public sector infrastructure development programs." (Diaspora Infrastructure Development Group, 2023)

12. ECO-6: ECO-6: Economic Community of the Sixth Region

"The Diaspora consists of almost 350 million people of African descent living outside of continental Africa.

It includes:

i) recent immigrants from continental Africa

ii) the historic Diaspora, being those Africans who were enslaved by Europeans and forcibly brought to Europe, the Americas, and the Caribbean" (ECO-6, 2023).

13. NiDCOM: Nigerians in Diaspora Commission

"Enacted by the National Assembly for the Federal Republic of Nigeria, Nigerians in Diaspora Commission, provide for the engagement of Nigerians in Diaspora in the policies, projects and participation in the development of Nigeria and for the purpose of utilising the human capital and material resources of Nigerians in Diaspora towards the overall socio-economic, cultural and political development of Nigeria and for related matters" (Nigerians in Diaspora Commission, 2023)

14. OACPS: Organisation of African, Caribbean and Pacific States

"Comprised of 79 Member States from Africa, the Caribbean and the Pacific, the Organisation of African, Caribbean and Pacific States (OACPS) strives to achieve the sustainable development of its members and their progressive integration into the

world economy" (Caribbean and the Pacific, the Organisation of African, Caribbean and Pacific States, 2023)

15. SOAD: State of the African Diaspora

"The African Diaspora is derived from two main waves of migration:

The first is related to the deportation of Africans in the context of the slave trade, whether it is the Eastern Trade (from the 7th to the beginning of the 20th century), or the Western Trade (from the 15th to the 19th century). The descendants of these populations are still living today in countries like Yemen or Iraq, or The United States of America and Brazil, for example.

The second wave is an economic migration that pushed the African population to Europe, since the twentieth century, especially after 1945. These are African descendants in France or the UK, but also in many other countries of the world" (State of the African Diaspora, 2023).

NOTE:

AfDA is holding a Global Diaspora Symposium in Abuja, Nigeria on 27-28 April 2023. ADDI approached the Zimbabwean Head of State who agreed to host the 8th Pan African Congress (PAC8) sometime in 2023, on a date to be advised.

Eight RECs

Currently, The AU recognises eight RECs, and these are:

- Arab Maghreb Union (UMA)
- Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa (COMESA)
- Community of Sahel–Saharan States (CEN–SAD)
- East African Community (EAC)
- Economic Community of Central African States (ECCAS)
- Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS)
- Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD)2
- Southern African Development Community (SADC).

(African Union, 2023)

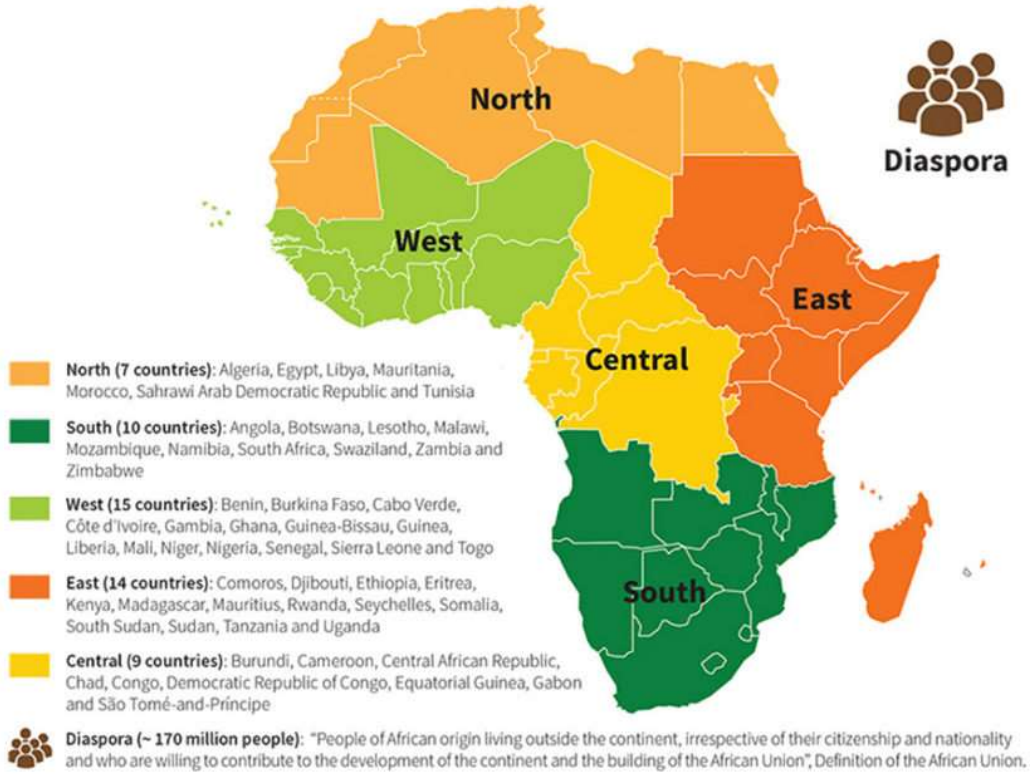
Conclusion

From the above, it is very clear that "Diaspora" is misconstrued to mean Region Six or the 6th Region, yet it refers to anyone scattered away from one's country of origin. This means, there is an African Diaspora in any of the regions within the continent of Africa and beyond. It is also imperative for the nine identified Sixth Regional Formations to come together and request formal recognition by the AU through one unified body. This can be achieved by the involvement of an African Heads of State at

the African Union level and then cascaded to the individual sovereign states' legislature.

Except for the AADFI and ADFC, the writer could not find evidence that any of the other formations is recognised by the AU. No matter how many the formations are, the one that would be recognised by the AU and the African states is the one that brings investment.

Appendix



The six regions of the African Union

06/02/2017

Regional integration | SWAC |

With the return of Morocco decided on 30 January 2017, all African states are now members of the African Union. The 55 members are grouped into five geographic regions (North, South, West, East and Central). The diaspora was constituted as the sixth region in 2003 to encourage the participation of people of African origin living outside the continent. West Africa is, with its 15 members of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) the region with the largest number of countries. It is also the most populous region, with an estimated 350 million people in 2015. Nigeria counts for more than half of West Africa's population. It is expected to become the world's third most populous country by 2050, following China and India. The African Union recognizes eight regional economic communities (UMA, COMESA, CEN-SAD, EAC, ECCAS, ECOWAS, IGAD and SADC). They are closely integrated with the African Union's work and serve as its building blocks. Despite many challenges, ECOWAS is among the best-performing economic communities on the continent.

Figure 1: The Six Regions of Africa

Where Is The African Diaspora?

Rank	Country	African Diaspora Population (Millions)
1	Brazil	55.9
2	United States	46.4
3	Haiti	10.1
4	Dominican Republic	9.2
5	Colombia	4.9
6	France	3.8
7	Venezuela	3.2
8	Jamaica	2.8
9	United Kingdom	2.5
10	Mexico	1.4

Figure 2: The African Diaspora

Source: (World Atlas, 2023)

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